

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET--SENSITIVE~~

Sunday, January 5, 1969 -- 5:15 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith a CIA evaluation of the
Czechoslovakian alert of their ground
forces which Mr. Rostow informed you
of earlier,

Charles Hayden
Charles Hayden
Situation Room

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Authority NJ-001-180-2-7

By Sj NARA Date 4-5-06

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Czechoslovakia

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The high state of alert ordered for Czechoslovakia's armed forces on 5 January was probably a precautionary measure in preparation for a televised speech later in the day by the controversial liberal chairman of the parliament, Josef Smrkovsky.

Under the new federalized system of government his job is up for grabs and there has been strong pressure from conservatives to dump him. Young people and workers have risen to his defense in a well publicized campaign, and they have threatened strikes and demonstrations if he is forced out.

We do not yet have a text of Smrkovsky's speech, but excerpts broadcast by Prague Radio indicate that he said his fate was not yet settled. He seemed also to be hinting that he would step down, but it is not at all clear. We expect to get a text later on tonight. So far there has been no report of trouble in Prague,

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By SJ NARA, Date 4-5-06

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but the alert may last for
some time yet.

The leadership is justifiably
nervous. On 4 January, the party
presidium warned that the campaign
to preserve key liberals in top
posts had complicated relations with
Czechoslovakia's Communist allies
and that this could lead to a
new crisis.

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